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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 003331

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SUBJECT: KUWAITIS FEAR IRANIAN HAND IN JULY 25 BORDER INCIDENT

REF: KUWAIT 3287

Classified By: CDA Matthew Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (S) Summary: Tensions persist at the Iraq/Kuwait border crossing near Umm Qasr with two RPG rounds fired at the Kuwait side the night of July 26 and Kuwaiti police returning fire. While the disturbances seems to be the result of local actions, GOK officials privately express concern that Iran may be stirring up the problem. Kuwait has temporarily suspended installment of the vehicle barrier in the immediate vicinity of the Umm Qasr farms/residences, but all sides agree that the barrier is on Kuwaiti soil. End Summary.

Kuwait Deputy Chief of Staff on Border Incidents

2. (S/NF) Office of Military Cooperation-Kuwait Chief met July 26 with Shaykh Ahmed Khalid Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief of Staff for the Kuwait Armed Forces, to discuss the July 25 disturbance on the Iraq/Kuwait border at Umm Qasr (reftel). Shaykh Ahmed expressed concern over possible Iranian involvement in the border incident. He told OMC-K Chief that a source at Umm Qasr suggested the protest was planned during a July 23 meeting of pro-Iranian Iraqis held in Umm Qasr. Majed Taher Al-Tamimi, head of the Umm Qasr Municipal Council and someone whom Shaykh Ahmed claimed was Iranian-influenced, led the July 23 meeting; Eid Obaied, Chief of the Popular Committees of Safwan, and an unidentified, suspected member of Iraqi Hezbollah attended the meeting, along with others, Shaykh Ahmed reported.

3. (S/NF) According to a Kuwaiti incident report given to OMC-K Chief during the meeting, the July 25 incident began around 0945 local time when approximately 90 Iraqis shouting protests approached a Kuwaiti pipe barrier being installed in Kuwaiti territory along the border. After growing to more than 400 persons, the group entered Kuwaiti territory and began dismantling the barrier. Iraqi police were present, but did not attempt to stop the protesters, the report stated. Kuwait Ministry of Interior Special Forces arrived around 1000 and began pushing protesters on Kuwait territory back across the border. The situation escalated when protesters began throwing rocks at Kuwaiti police and contractors. According to the report, what sounded like two to three rounds from a small arms weapon were fired from the Iraqi side of the border, though no weapons were seen. Around 1115, the protesters started to withdraw. At noon, Al-Tamimi held another meeting, with the same individuals in attendance, to discuss the protest, Shaykh Ahmed reported. The protesters delivered an unsigned demand to the Kuwaitis claiming the current border demarcation resulted from negotiations with Saddam Hussien's regime and, therefore, was no longer legitimate.

4. (S/NF) Shaykh Ahmed made clear to OMC-K Chief his concerns that Iran instigated the protests. He characterized Al-Tamimi as an active agent of Iran and emphasized the presence of an Iraqi Hezbollah representative at the meetings where, according to Shaykh Ahmed, the protests were planned and reviewed. Kuwaiti press articles July 27 suggested a third country was behind the protests, without naming Iran specifically.

RPG Rounds Fired at Border

5. (S) Kuwaiti officials reported two RPG rounds were fired from Iraq across the border into Kuwait the night of July 26/morning of July 27. Kuwaiti police returned fire on a house in Umm Qasr they suspected the RPGs were fired from. Iraqi police investigated, but found nothing. No casualties were reported.

6. (S) Contractors resumed work on the Kuwaiti border pipe on the morning of July 27. Between 100 and 150 Iraqis began protesting again at the installation site where they burned tires and shouted at Kuwaiti contractors. Kuwaiti police did not respond. Iraqi police did nothing to stop the protests, sources said. Sources also reported gunfire at a Kuwaiti police border check point around 1050.

17. (S) The GOK and the ITG are cooperating to de-escalate the border protests. An Iraqi Minister of Interior official told Kuwaiti officials the protests are a local problem caused by farmers and municipal officials. According to Shaykh Ahmed, Kuwait Deputy Undersecretary of Interior, Sadr Al-Mashan, met July 27 with Umm Qasr Municipal Council official, Al-Tamimi. Al-Mashan told Al-Tamimi Kuwait will temporarily stop installation of the pipe barrier 300 meters west of the Umm Qasr housing district and resume installation 300 meters east. In response, Al-Tamimi agreed there would be no more protests. According to the British Embassy, Kuwait FM, Shaykh Mohammad Al-Sabah, and Kuwait Interior Minister, Shaykh Nawaf Al-Sabah, spoke to their counterparts in Iraq today by phone. The GOK was pleased with the ITG officials' verbal responses to the border disturbance.

18. (C) For pictures of the protest site, please see Embassy Kuwait's classified website.

Visit Embassy Kuwait's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/>

You can also access this site through the
State Department's Classified SIPRNET website

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